



# THE VISN VOICE



January 2009

## I THOUGHT YOU WOULD LIKE TO KNOW

Mr. Garfunkel

### Welcome to 2009

Let me start by wishing everyone a very Happy and Healthy New Year.

There is great anticipation about 2009 in the Department of Veterans Affairs. As you all know by now, we will have a new Secretary, retired General Eric Shinseki. A new Secretary always means changes, often significant and far reaching. We will have to wait to see. Also, at least in part due to a new President of a different political party than the outgoing President, we can expect many, if not just about all, of the Schedule C (political appointees), at high levels of VA, to be replaced. Obviously, this means many changes, as new people with usually different ideas, take over important positions.

One change that we know, almost for certain, will be opening up eligibility to some portion of Priority 8 Veterans. President Elect Obama has indicated on his web site that this is a priority for him, and Congress has already allocated funding for this additional group of veterans. We anticipate new rules being issued soon.

We also know from the President-elect's web site that he favors a more stable type of funding for the VA, so that we know in advance what our funding will be for each year.

Anything else is just guess work at this point, but I would guess, that with new leadership, will come many other changes, including organizational structures, more of or less of centralization, perhaps a new budget allocation process, changes in our IT programs, and new and perhaps different performance measures.

It certainly will be an exciting time. Being in this geographic region, so close to our Central Office, we usually are the first Network to experience a visit by a new Secretary. We look forward to that visit and to learning what the future will bring in 2009.

### Special points of interest:

*News From Around  
the Network*

**Washington DC VAMC**

**VAMHCS**

**Martinsburg VAMC**

**VISN 5 Service Area**

### Editors Note: How to contribute to THE VISN VOICE NEWSLETTER

The VISN Voice is a monthly Network publication, and a source of educational and informational articles for employees, volunteers, and veterans of the VA Capitol Health Care Network. Submit your information via outlook e-mail to [VISN5 Employee Newsletter](#) by the end of the month for the following month's publication. Please do not send PowerPoint or Published documents—use Word. Please include the following information: name, title, service, facility, and reason for submission. Submissions should not exceed 350 words. The editor reserves the right to make edits to any submission chosen for publication, and not all submissions will be chosen for publication. Ken Sliker—Editor

## VISN 5 Introduction to Planetree

VISN 5 has partnered with Planetree, a non-profit organization that provides education and information in a collaborative community of health care organizations to facilitate efforts to create patient-centered care in healing environments throughout VISN 5.

Founded by a patient in 1978, Planetree is an internationally-recognized leader in patient-centered care, and works with more than 140 organizations in the United States, Canada, the Netherlands, Brazil and Japan to promote mental, emotional, spiritual, social, and physical healing. It empowers patients and families through the exchange of information and encourages healing partnerships with caregivers. The Planetree model is implemented in acute and critical care departments, emergency departments, long-term care facilities, as well as ambulatory care and community health centers. Planetree affiliated sites operate in diverse health care settings, with each site adapting the Planetree model as required by its unique needs. These facilities range from small rural hospitals to large urban medical centers and include other VA Medical Centers in New York, New Jersey, California, Nevada, and Michigan.

All employees are encouraged to attend a one-hour Planetree Information Session, presented by a representative from Planetree, to learn more about this community health care network model of care and its future implementation into the care delivered throughout the VA.

### Information Sessions

Washington VA Medical Center  
January 13-14, 2009

VAMHCS facilities  
January 21, 22, and 23, 2009

Martinsburg VA Medical Center  
February 3-4, 2009

Specific details about times and location of each session was posted at the facility where they were held and distributed in appropriate employee notices.

Following the information sessions, a Planetree representative conducted facility-specific Organizational Assessments to identify where opportunities exist to expand on the excellent care provided to our veterans. As part of the assessments, some veterans and staff were invited to attend one of a series of focus groups to provide comments and present ideas. The information that is gathered will provide the basis for a set of recommendations to advance veteran-centered care at each of the VISN 5 facilities.

### Facility Organizational Assessment:

Washington VA Medical Center  
January 28-30, 2009

VAMHCS facilities  
February 10-13, 2009

Martinsburg VA Medical Center  
February 24-26, 2009

Additional information can be obtained by calling facility Planetree coordinators:

VAMHCS facilities:

Valerie Calm-Coleman – 410-605-7244

Ron Hoffmann – 410-605-7244

Washington VA Medical Center:

Xavier Teasley - 202-745-8000 x 4726

Paula Gorman - 202-745-4342

Bridgette Wiley -202-745-8000 x 5200

Martinsburg VA Medical Center:

Elisabeth Sethi, MD - 304-263-0811 x4297

Kim Waggoner - 304 263-0811 x 4072

### VISN 5 Employee Newsletter

**Editor-Ken Sliker**  
**VISN 5**

#### Contributing Editors

**Dawn Miller**

**VISN 5**

**Molly Majka**

**VISN 5**

**Michelle Spivak**

**Washington DC VAMC**

**David Edwards**

**VAMHCS**

**Michael Dukes**

**VAMHCS**

**Margaret Hornberger**

**VAMHCS**

**Barbara Corbin**

**Martinsburg VAMC**

### VA Capitol Health Care Network, VISN 5

**849 International Drive,  
Suite 275**

**Linthicum, MD 21090**

**Phone: 410-691-1131**

**Fax: 410-684-3189**

**E-mail:**

**[VISN5 Employee Newsletter](#)**

## WASHINGTON DC VAMC NEWS

### Homeless Veterans Receive Services at VA Medical Center's Winterhaven Stand



A Winterhaven participant speaks with Dr. Kussman, Under Secretary for Health; Secretary of Veterans Affairs James Peake and DCVAMC Chief of Staff, Dr. Ross Fletcher.



American Postal Workers Union Volunteers help Winterhaven participants check out of the event's final station—receiving backpacks full of sundry items.



## WASHINGTON DC VAMC NEWS

### Homeless Veterans Receive Services at VA Medical Center's Winterhaven Stand Down

WASHINGTON, D.C. – More than 300 metro-area homeless veterans received medical care, employment advice, clothing and counseling at the Winterhaven Stand Down hosted by the Washington, DC Veterans Affairs Medical Center (DC VAMC) January 10th.

“We served 326 veterans today. Giving them access to needed health care and resources that will help them on the road to healthy living and independence,” said Fernando O. Rivera, Medical Center Director. The presence of Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Dr. James B. Peake, at this event demonstrates how important breaking the cycle of homelessness in veterans is to VA.”

Now in its 15th year, the Winterhaven Stand Down brought together community agencies and Veterans Service Organizations to serve the local homeless veteran population. Participants received physical and dental exams, flu shots, and were screened for cholesterol, hepatitis C, and HIV. A full range of mental health services, including screenings for post-traumatic stress disorder and substance abuse, were available. A dedicated Women's Health Clinic provided private consultations for homeless women veterans.

Employment and benefits claims assistance were provided through VA, area employment offices, and Veterans Service Organizations. Hot meals, haircuts and beauty services, clothing tokens, and comfort items were also provided.



A veteran takes a rest at the Washington DC VA Medical Center's Winterhaven 2009 Jan. 10.

### DC VAMC Honored with the McNulty Award

Washington DC VA Medical Center (DC VAMC) has been recognized for its leadership in delivering outstanding health care to veterans.

The Healthcare Council of the National Capital Area honored DC VAMC with the McNulty Award, acknowledging the hospital for consistently providing high-quality care. DC VAMC is the first Federal facility to receive this honor.

The Healthcare Council is an association of health care providers, schools and health-related institutions serving Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia.

The McNulty Award, named for Matthew (Matt) McNulty, Jr., SC.D., a model communicator, organizer and leader, dedicated to providing excellence in health care. He served more than 20 plus as a leader on the Board and Executive Committee of the Healthcare Council.



Left to right: Joseph Burns, President of the Healthcare Council, National Capital Area; Dr. Omega Silva, George Washington University Hospital, and Fernando O. Rivera, Medical Center Director; at the recent McNulty Award Ceremony.

## VA MARYLAND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM (VAMHCS) NEWS

### Employees Celebrated During 13th Annual Employee Appreciation Week



Regina Kennedy, Chief of Prosthetics Service, entertained the crowd during the Karaoke Party at the Baltimore VA Medical Center.



Ed Calendar, from Medical Media Production Service, enjoyed a holiday-style luncheon with complementary service provided by Tinisha Agramonte, EEO Manager, during the Employee Appreciation Week Luncheon at the Baltimore VA Medical Center.



Employees let their hair down and displayed their line dancing skills during the Employee Appreciation Week Luncheon at the Perry Point VA Medical Center.

“Celebrating Your Giving Spirit” was this year’s theme for Employee Appreciation Week throughout the VA Maryland Health Care System (VAMHCS), which was celebrated during the week of December 8-12, 2008. The week-long celebration was packed with fun activities to thank VAMHCS employees for their contributions to a successful Joint Commission survey and Combined Federal Campaign, and to recognize them for ranking as one of the top ten places to work in Baltimore!

We are all very busy throughout the year, but sometimes we forget that it is important to be recognized for doing a good job and providing a valuable service. During the celebration, VAMHCS employees were reminded that their hard work and dedication does not go unnoticed. Employee Appreciation Week chairpersons at the Baltimore and Perry Point VA Medical Centers; the Baltimore VA Rehabilitation & Extended Care Center; and the Cambridge, Fort Howard, Glen Burnie, Loch Raven, and Pocomoke City VA Outpatient Clinics coordinated special events tailored to their respective campuses, including door decorating contests, a talent show, health and fitness competitions, karaoke parties, holiday luncheons, VAMHCS Spirit Day, and more.

“This Employee Appreciation week was the best I have ever seen since working at the VA Maryland Health Care System. It was well coordinated, on time, and the lunch was fantastic,” commented Arlene Gaydos, from Consumer Relations Service.



## VA MARYLAND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM (VAMHCS) NEWS

### Electronic Documentation Application Enhances Clinical Support to Veterans in Intensive Care Units

By Margaret Hornberger

The Philips IntelliVue Clinical Information Portfolio (ICIP), an electronic documentation application, is proving to be an effective clinical decision support tool toward improving the delivery of health care to hospitalized veteran patients in intensive care units at the Baltimore VA Medical Center, a division of the VA Maryland Health Care System (VAMHCS).

Over the past two years, the effectiveness of the ICIP system has been tested by the Baltimore VA Medical Center's intensive care nurses as part of an interdisciplinary collaboration with services and departments throughout the facility. Because Philips has actively involved the Baltimore VA Medical Center as a test site and provided intensive care nursing staff the opportunity to identify concerns with the paperless charting process, the result is a more responsive, appropriate and concise data structure.

"Serving as a BETA test site for the Philips ICIP system has allowed the Baltimore VA Medical Center's cardiac, medical and surgical intensive care unit nurses to test and configure this application according to the needs of the veteran population served," said Sara Toscano, the clinical informatics coordinator at Baltimore VA Medical Center.

The new ICIP system populates data from bedside devices such as cardiac monitors, ventilators, and other biomedical devices to produce an electronic assessment of the patient.

Monitoring includes access to digital cardiac rhythm images, archived patient data, lab results and other vital

patient data that has been captured and analyzed. The Philips ICIP system is easy to navigate because it uses familiar Microsoft Windows screens, menus, and commands. A help application also provides contextual information and instructions from any screen.

Previous versions of Philips' electronic documentation applications have been utilized in the intensive care units at the Baltimore VA Medical Center. However, the ICIP application is a more robust version, allowing nursing staff in these units to experience a more efficient and readily available electronic method for closely monitoring vital patient data, such as ventilator and glucometer results.

"Thanks to the incredible teamwork by staff members at the Baltimore VA Medical Center in configuring the ICIP application, and; the support and assistance received by the Philips research and development team, we are now better equipped to capture and analyze data, thereby increasing the opportunity to provide clinical support and decrease a patient's length of hospital stay," said Toscano.

In addition to the Baltimore VA Medical Center, the VA Medical Centers in Martinsburg, WV, and Washington, D.C., are now in the process of implementing the ICIP system, which is anticipated to be fully operational throughout the VA Capitol Health Care Network by summer 2009.

### Combined Federal Campaign Goal Surpassed!

In spite of the downturn in the economy, employees throughout the VA Maryland Health Care System (VAMHCS) stepped up to support local and national charitable organizations during the 2008 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Through payroll deductions, one-time contributions and special events, VAMHCS employees contributed over \$115,000 for this year's CFC, which is \$15,000 over the \$100,000 goal set for the 2008 campaign.

Established more than 40 years ago with the signing of a Presidential Executive Order, the CFC offers a vehicle for public support of more than 2,000 social, educational and health and welfare organizations. Through direct donations or payroll deductions, the campaign allows federal employees to assist those agencies they care about most. What was initially piloted in 1964 as an experiment has grown to become the nation's largest fundraising effort and the official uniform fundraising method for the federal service. More than 385 regional campaigns contributed to the overall national CFC effort last year, perpetuating a tradition of generosity that has come to define charitable giving within the federal workplace.

The employees of the VAMHCS have once again demonstrated that it is better to give than to receive when it comes to supporting those in need. Exceeding the goal for this year's CFC is a direct reflection of the giving spirit VAMHCS employees demonstrate each and every day. Congratulations to all VAMHCS employees for supporting this year's CFC.

## MARTINSBURG VAMC NEWS

### "GREEN KITCHEN" PROJECT

Nutrition and Food Service (NFS) employees are proud of their "Green Kitchen" initiatives to re-design their use of natural resources. They have identified four categories—increase sustainable food and beverage procurement, improve energy and water conservation, and improve waste management. The category most important to veteran satisfaction is sustainable food and beverage procurement. Using the "Farm to Hospital Program," NFS staff purchased some of their produce, basically salad bar items, from a local organic farm. Future plans are to expand the locally purchased food varieties.



### VETERANS DAY ROAD TO FREEDOM 5K



Good weather brought a record crowd to the Martinsburg VA Medical Center for the 9th Annual Veterans Day 5K Walk, Run and Roll. Temperatures rose into the upper 50's for the 9 a.m., start, with a light breeze providing the only obstacle on the 3.1 mile course. Among the 185 official 5K finishers were at least 42 veterans, honored with their own special awards categories. An 83-year-old veteran ran the race for the fourth year. A number of employees, including the Medical Center Director, ran in the event.

This 5K event was open to all levels of runners, walkers, or individuals in wheelchairs wishing to show their support for veterans on this special day. Awards were given for male, female, and veteran age groups. Proceeds benefit hospitalized veteran recreational activities.



## MARTINSBURG VAMC NEWS

### HOMELESS VETERAN (GOALS) STAND DOWN



The Martinsburg VA Medical Center hosted its first Homeless Veterans Stand Down on December 13, 2008.

### TOYS FOR TOTS



On December 15, 2008, the local Marine Corps League hosted a Toys for Tots project. Employees enjoyed purchasing gifts for each other and then donating them to Toys for Tots.



## Relaxation of Priority Group 8 Enrollment Restrictions

### Description

Public Law 110-329 provides VA additional funding to allow expanded enrollment opportunity for certain Priority 8 veterans who may have been previously denied enrollment in VA's health care system because their income exceeded VA's means tests thresholds.

The new provision allows veterans whose incomes do not exceed these thresholds by more than 10 percent to enroll in VA's health care system. The new provision is expected to take effect this June and will be applied retroactively to all enrollment applications received on or after January 1, 2009. These changes do not open enrollment to all Priority 8 veterans.

### Impact

A veteran who applies for enrollment after the effective date of the new provision (expected in June 2009), does not qualify for a higher priority group and whose income exceeds the means test threshold (MTT) or geographic means test threshold (GMTT) by 10% or less will be placed in priority group 8b (if the veteran is 0% service-connected, non-compensable) or 8d (if the veteran is nonservice-connected) and enrolled in the VA health care system.

A veteran who applies for enrollment on or after January 1, 2009, but before the effective date of the new rule, does not qualify for a higher priority group and whose income exceeds the MTT or GMTT by 10% or less will be placed in priority group 8e or 8g and will not be enrolled in the VA health care system. However, the VA Health Eligibility Center will re-determine enrollment using the relaxed income restriction on the effective date of the new provision for those veterans who applied on or after January 1, 2009, and who have been placed in enrollment category 8e or 8g. This approach will relieve veterans from having to submit multiple enrollment applications for the same year. For those veterans who apply on or after January 1, 2009, and are placed into a rejected priority group due to income, VA enrollment correspondence will indicate that VA will re-determine enrollment after the effective date of the new rule.

A veteran who applied for enrollment prior to January 1, 2009, did not qualify for a higher priority group and whose income exceeded the MTT or GMTT by 10% or less will not be placed in priority group 8b or 8d, rather the veteran will continue to be placed in priority group 8e or 8g. Veterans whose application for enrollment was rejected due to exceeding the MTT or GMTT and whose application was submitted and determined prior to January 1, 2009, will need to submit a new application for enrollment in 2009 to take advantage of the relaxed income restrictions.

### Additional Information

Veterans are encouraged to contact VA's Health Benefits Service Center at 1-877-222 VETS (8387); or

Visit the VA health eligibility website at [www.va.gov/healtheligibility](http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility).

# VISN 5 Service Area



## Facility Numbers

### VA Maryland HCS

1-800-865-2441  
Baltimore VAMC Medical Care Line  
1-800-463-6295  
Perry Point VAMC Medical Care Line  
1-800-949-1003  
Baltimore Rehab & Extended Care Center  
1-800-463-6295  
Prescription Refill  
1-800-463-6295, ext 7395

### Martinsburg VAMC

(304) 263-0811  
Medical Advice Line  
1-800-817-3807 or (304) 262-4855  
VETS Information  
(304) 263-0811, ext 3758/3757  
Monday—Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
Or ext. 3050 after 4:30 p.m.  
Prescription Refill  
1-800-817-3807, prompt # 2

### Washington DC VAMC

(202) 745-8000  
Medical Advice Line  
(202) 745-8247  
VETS Information  
(202) 745-4046  
PTSD Clinic Number  
(202) 745-8591  
Prescription Refill  
1-888-553-0242

### Cambridge, MD

(410) 228-6243

### Fort Howard, MD

(410) 477-1800

### Hagerstown, MD

(301) 665-1462

### Alexandria, VA

(703) 313-0694

### Franklin, WV

(304) 358-2355

### Charlotte Hall, MD

(301) 884-7102

### Glen Burnie, MD

(410) 590-4140

### Loch Raven, MD

(410) 605-7650

### Harrisonburg, VA

(540) 442-1773

### Petersburg, WV

(304) 257-5817

### Cumberland, MD

(301) 724-0061

### Greenbelt, MD

(301) 345-2463

### Pocomoke City, MD

(410) 957-6718

### Stephens City, VA

(540) 869-0600

### Washington, DC

(202) 745-8685

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